

Labor "Leaders" and Workers' Control

By Tom Clark.

Some time ago, John Mitchell, of Civic Federation fame, died. He was the labor "leader", who was made a hero of by the coal miners. He was the man who worked up from the mines, became an organizer, finally graduating into the rank of "leader".

He used to meet the bosses at the Civic Federation. He had banquets with them at fine hotels, discussed labor troubles and labor affairs with them, drink champagne, talked about business matters in general, the possibility of bosses getting more work out of the workers and the workers getting more or less pay for the work, smoking fine cigars etc. etc.

He was the fellow who used to stand up for labor wherever the bosses were — in fact, he was considered a fit representative of labor.

He received a good salary — and the champagne and cigars that the bosses gave him cost him nothing. That he lost all touch with the working class was quite natural. With his salary, he could ride around in motor cars, live in good hotels, sleep in Pullmans, always have good food and wear nice clothes.

The only time he faced poverty and struggle and want was when he went to the union meetings or journeyed to the mining towns. There he saw the sour faces and bent backs of the miners; the black smokey yards and homes of the people; the bedraggled wives and children.

But that was easy to forget, when he left town in a Pullman and rode to New York to his friends of the Civic Federation, where they preached the "harmony of capital and labor." Harmony which meant that the worker had better take what he was offered or the government would take care of him.

Like all good men, John was promoted and became Public Service Commissioner — and finally died, leaving a fortune of more than \$334,000.

Then take our good friend, Sam Gompers. Of course, one must not even suggest that Sammy is taking graft. True, he gets a good salary, rides in Pullmans, stays at good hotels, dines and sups with his capitalist friends — the "friends of labor" — also at the Civic Federation.

The Bosses Applaud.

He tells them about labor's rights and labor's duties — and the bosses, who listen and yawn, and yawn and listen—think mostly of labor's duties. The champagne goes to Sammy's head and he talks about patriotism and Americanism, and he assails the Russians, and defends American "democracy" against the Reds in America. And he is applauded by the friends of the Civic Federation — even by Judge Gary!

Gary, at whose mills and in whose town (Gary, Ind.), no organizer of Gompers's Federation of Labor dare show his face. Gary, who engages thugs and detectives and gunmen, to mercilessly shoot down workers who dare to discuss labor affairs or even breathe about the advantage of organizing or joining a union!

Yes, this same Gary applauds Sam Gompers when he talks this highfalutin stuff the same as he would applaud a vaudeville artist or an occrobat. Why not? It's amusing —and Samy IS an amusing little cuss.

Only Sammy is an expensive cuss—costing the workers millions in blood and money. He is the man that ONCE was a worker, but long ago graduated, and now dines and drinks with the bosses. The only time that he sees the workers is when he attends a convention and delivers a papatriotic oration about the evil the "Reds" are creating and the necessity of fighting them; or when he stops at a hotel or rides in a Pullman and sees his "fellow workers" who feed him, brush his clothes, attend his wants, etc.

That is what becomes of a labor leader who no longer knows want and hunger and unemployment; who does not know what a Saturday night is without a pay envelope—who does not know, from day to day, whether he will not be denied the right to work.

But Sam represents the dignity of labor—although that dignity was badly damaged when he went to the Republican convention to talk about labor, and they told him to get out. And when he went to the Democratic convention and they put a few words in their program, just to let the folks know that Sam had called.